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USAID

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Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters he was now the acting head of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the agency that distributes billions of dollars in aid around the world.

Democratic lawmakers have called it an "illegal, unconstitutional" move that would hurt poor people abroad, harm national security and reduce US influence on the global stage.

President Donald Trump and one of his top advisers, billionaire Elon Musk, have been strongly critical of the agency. Speaking to reporters at the White House on Monday, Trump alleged the agency run by "radical left lunatics" was getting away with "tremendous fraud", but did not provide names or details.

USAID was established in 1961 by President John F Kennedy, and has around 10,000 employees and a budget of nearly \$40bn (£32.25bn), out of a total of \$68bn in US government foreign aid spending.

Calling USAID "a completely unresponsive agency", Secretary Rubio said that a lot of functions of the organisation "are going to continue".

"They're going to be part of American foreign policy, but it has to be aligned with American foreign policy," he told reporters in El Salvador.

It's not clear how the administration plans to implement such a change.

The announcement follows comments from Musk, who heads an unofficial cost-cutting agency, that the administration plans to shut USAID down. Over the weekend, two top security officials were placed on leave and the agency's website went dark.

Workers were told to stay home on Monday. Hundreds of employees were also locked out of their email, according to an internal message obtained.

In a live stream on X early Monday, he told followers: "You've got to basically get rid of the whole thing. It's beyond repair. ... We're shutting it down."

US media on Monday, citing unnamed White House sources, said Musk had been given an unpaid job as a part-time "special government employee", a status which would potentially make him subject to several rules about financial disclosures and conflicts of interest.

At the White House, Trump defended Musk's handling of the situation, saying the tech tycoon has "access only to letting people go that he thinks are no good, if we agree with him, and it's only if we agree with him".

"Elon can't do and won't do anything without our approval," he said.

USAID distributes billions in aid to non-governmental organisations, aid groups and nonprofits around the world.

With its website down, several key information hubs, including an

No classified material was accessed without proper security clearances," Katie Miller, Doge spokesperson, wrote on X.

USAID director for security John Vorhees and deputy Director for Security Brian McGill, were both placed on administrative leave as

a result, CBS reports.

A top political appointee, USAID chief of staff Matt Hopson, also resigned, the Washington Post reported.

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